

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An image forming apparatus comprising:

an image carrier configured to carry a color image thereon;

an elastic transfer member configured to contact said image carrier to thereby

[[forma]] form a nip for electrostatically transferring the color image from said image carrier to a recording medium, and to cause said recording medium being conveyed toward said nip to contact said image carrier and then enter said nip;

a first guide member configured to guide one side of the recording medium expected to receive the color image to said nip, and including, in a portion thereof contacting the recording medium other than a leading and a trailing edge of said recording medium in a direction of conveyance in which said recording medium is conveyed while guiding said recording medium, a first restriction point located at a most downstream side in said direction of conveyance; and

a second guide member configured to guide the other side of the recording medium to said nip, and including, in a portion thereof contacting the recording medium other than the leading and the trailing edge in the direction of conveyance while guiding said recording medium, a second restriction point located at a most downstream side in said direction and downstream of said first restriction point;

wherein said first guide member and said second guide member are positioned such that said first restriction point is positioned at an opposite side to said image carrier with respect to a reference line connecting said second restriction point and an upstream end of said nip in the direction of conveyance.

Claim 2 (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a free end of said first guide member is deformable such that when the ~~training~~ trailing edge of the recording medium moves away ~~[[f rom]]~~ from said free end, said free end adjoins the reference line.

Claim 3 (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the free end of said first guide member is formed of an elastic material so as to be deformable when the recording medium exerts a force on said ~~[[f ree]]~~ free end when leaving said free end.

Claim 4 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 5 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein a part of said image carrier forming the nip has a radius of curvature of 10 mm to 20 mm.

Claim 6 (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30~~[[,]]~~ mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 7 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein an upstream portion of said first guide member, including said first restriction point, in the direction of conveyance is not deformable.

Claim 8 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 9 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein a part of said image carrier forming the nip has a radius of curvature of 10 mm to 20 mm.

Claim 10 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 11 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein an upstream portion of said first guide member, including said first restriction point, in the direction of conveyance is not deformable.

Claim 12 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 13 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein a part of said image carrier forming the nip has a radius of curvature of 10 mm to 20 mm.

Claim 14 (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in claim 13, ~~wherein~~ wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 15 (currently amended): An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a part of said image carrier forming the ~~[[hip]]~~ nip has a radius of curvature of 10 mm to 20 mm.

Claim 16 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from

the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 17 (original): An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the recording medium being conveyed toward the nip contacts said image carrier at a position remote from the upstream end of the nip by 3 mm to 30 mm toward an upstream side with respect to a direction in which a surface of said image carrier moves.

Claim 18 (currently amended): ~~[[In a]]~~ A method of conveying a recording medium, to which a color image is to be electrostatically transferred from an image carrier, to a nip for image transfer formed between said image carrier and an elastic transfer member such that said recording medium contacts said image carrier and then enters said nip, comprising conveying said recording medium ~~is conveyed while being restricted~~ such that a most downstream point of a first restricting portion, which restricts an image transfer side of said recording medium, other than opposite ends in a direction of conveyance is positioned at an opposite side ~~[[to]]~~ of said image carrier with respect to a reference line connecting a most downstream point of a second restricting portion, which restricts the other side of ~~[[.]]~~ said recording medium, other than opposite ends in said direction of conveyance ~~[[and]]~~ with an upstream end of said nip in said direction of conveyance.

Claim 19 (withdrawn): An image forming apparatus comprising:

an intermediate transfer body for carrying a color image;

transferring means for conveying a recording medium while causing said recording medium to bend toward and move along a part of said intermediate transfer body at an upstream side in a direction of conveyance in a transfer region in which a color image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred to said recording medium; and

contact assisting means for maintaining the recording medium and said intermediate transfer body in close contact with each other.

Claim 20 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said contact assisting means comprises a pressing member that presses the recording medium against said intermediate transfer body.

Claim 21 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein said contact assisting means comprises a movement resistance member that exerts resistance to a movement of the recording medium being conveyed.

Claim 22 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 21, wherein said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 23 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 21, wherein said movement resistance member contacts a part of the recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 24 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein said pressing member includes a pressing portion that presses the recording medium over an entire width of said recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 25 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein said contact assisting means comprises a movement resistance member that exerts resistance to a movement of the recording medium being conveyed.

Claim 26 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 27 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said movement resistance member contacts a part of the recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 28 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 27, wherein said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 29 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said contact assisting means comprises a movement resistance member that exerts resistance to a movement of the recording medium being conveyed.

Claim 30 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 31 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein said movement resistance member contacts a part of the recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 32 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 31, where in said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 33 (withdrawn): An image forming apparatus comprising:

an intermediate transfer body for carrying a color image;

a transferring device configured to convey a recording medium while causing said recording medium to bend toward and move along a part of said intermediate transfer body at an upstream side in a direction of conveyance in a transfer region in which a color image on said intermediate transfer body is transferred to said recording medium; and

a contact assisting member positioned upstream of said transfer region in the direction of conveyance for maintaining the recording medium and said intermediate transfer body in close contact with each other.

Claim 34 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 33, wherein said contact assisting member comprises a pressing member that presses the recording medium against said intermediate transfer body.

Claim 35 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 34, wherein said pressing member includes a pressing portion that presses the recording medium over an entire width of said recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 36 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 33, wherein said contact assisting member comprises a pressing member that presses the recording medium against said intermediate transfer body.

Claim 37 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein said contact assisting member comprises a movement resistance member that exerts resistance to a movement of the recording medium being conveyed and said movement resistance member contacts a part of the recording medium in a direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): An apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein said movement resistance member comprises a rotary member driven to rotate in a direction in which the recording medium is conveyed.

Claim 39 (withdrawn): In an image transferring device for transferring a color image formed on an intermediate transfer body to a recording medium being conveyed by being warped such that said recording medium moves along a part of said intermediate transfer body positioned upstream of a transfer region in a direction of conveyance, a contact assisting

member is positioned upstream of said transfer region in said direction of conveyance and configured to maintain said recording medium and said intermediate transfer body in close contact with each other.